

2002 Annual Report Executive Summary

Lower Yakima County Enterprise Community

Lower Yakima Valley Rural Enterprise Community is a Round 1 designee located in the heart of one of the most productive agricultural areas in the country. There are approximately 15,000 residents in and around the rural communities of Grandview and Sunnyside, Census tracts 19 and 20.01, in south central Washington State. The lead agency for the program is Yakima County.

In 1998, the Lower Yakima County Rural Enterprise Community (LYCREC), a non-profit 501c3 Corporation contracted with the County to administer the grant initiative. In 2002 the Corporation expended all of the dollars designated for this administration. This created a very challenging year for the Staff and Board of Directors. In order to continue to do the work that the Corporation was contracted to do and sustain itself, new sources of revenue needed to be identified and secured quickly. Partners had been working with the Corporation since October 2001 to help them devise a plan to do so. By April 2002, all three paid staff had resigned their positions to seek other opportunities. A temporary Executive Director was hired to see to the day to day activities. After a great deal of effort and several unsuccessful grant applications, it became apparent that LYCREC was not going to be able to sustain the operation and continue to address the goals and objectives of the initiative as outlined in the strategic plan. The contract with LYCREC was terminated on December 31, 2002. These efforts to maintain a stable corporate foundation distracted from their work as administrators and guardians of the EC funds.

In spite of these very challenging circumstances, the Rural Enterprise Community enjoyed a number of successes. Several projects with great promise and prospects for long term sustainability were launched.

Housing – The Bienestar "Well-Being" Transitional Living Center opened in Sunnyside, Washington. It's the first residential service of its kind available in the Lower Valley. The facility houses four to six families at any given time. In addition to providing a safe environment, center services include case management to help stabilize families while they locate acceptable permanent housing.

Infrastructure – A \$200,000 grant was the final piece needed to leverage funds for new infrastructure in Grandview. The development of this land was the key to attracting a large WalMart distribution center and 600 new jobs.

Community Development – The REC Community Neighborhood Outreach Committee took root this year. Under their leadership, a number of local groups and public safety entities formed partnerships to conduct neighborhood meetings. Information was provided in both Spanish and English to ensure all citizens had the opportunity to participate.

Healthcare – The Sunnyside Regional Healthcare Consortium was able to continue their work as a result of the support they received from the EC. Other partners who include local healthcare, schools, and workforce development programs have contributed technical assistance and grant writing services towards their efforts.

We look forward to a challenging year as we approach the end of our designation. We are refocusing on the needs of the community and strengthening partnerships while leveraging funds to make the best use of both financial and human resources. The foundation has been laid to reengage our community and government partners in our efforts to have a positive impact on capacity building, youth, and the development of new leaders to carry the torch for economic and community development into the next decade.